

## PLOTINIAN PERSONALITY VI -- HARMONY

Marc Edmund Jones

This lesson in the *Enneads of Plotinus* is a consideration of *Problems of the Soul (I)* through sections twelve to seventeen of the tractate, and the ultimate fullness of living is here a touch with the ultimate nature of choice as the harmonizing act of personality. Harmony is never a surrender to convenience or a recession of self in the face of any necessity but ever is an enlarged outstreaming of selfhood. It is true that harmony always indicates the fitting of the needs of individuality into those of other individuality or the group, but if this involves a curtailment of the personality the eventual result is either a loss of participation by personality as an inner and perhaps unsuspected diminution of the giving of self and so a loss of real or underlying interest or else is a later revolt and repudiation of the harmony as inharmonious in the individual sphere. Harmony is an act of personality and therefore must be creative at all times. When the many are brought to a unity in the group the shared responsibility must be an enhancement of all individuality concerned if in no more than the increased moment of fellowship in the association. Choice is the individual manifestation of harmony as it moves to a unifying of the being through a change in outer relationships or else gives the being a unifying experience in the advancement of a group interest. Choice is of soul and the soul is never cut off from its origin, as Plotinus reemphasizes. In consequence the choice is an act out of origin, and harmony is a participation of Source in the livingness. Individuality cannot be held to the limitations in which sense of choice is lost or the feeling of harmony dissipated and so in ordinary life the phenomenon of death is really a respite from the bonds only soluble by passing to another realm of existence. Of course personality of no consciousness above physical living is canceled as such when the life span is over, but the values of consciousness and soul as well as those of body will revert to source and there be renewed for further participation in individual aggregations. The soul is freed from body to have universal dwelling above, in terms of the Plotinian system, but soul unconscious in itself will have no conscious continuance and hence no immortality. Life therefore is seen as the period of living for the establishment of character or culturing conscious personality that will learn the Eternal in its choices and live eternity in the harmony of transcendent or immortal consciousness.

The dynamic of consciousness is thus immortal choice, or the capacity of the being to react always to the higher and to live ever for the glory of the eternal. Soul is harmonious with the cosmic circuit since both express a reality ordered apart from the

nihilism of mere matter. In this Plotinus finds his justification of astrology or the concordance of life revealed in the larger cosmic unity. The stars are not causes, but in the universal harmony they serve to measure human destiny exactly as in the totality of society the acts and choices of individuals reveal each to each other through the advancement or retardation of the group wholeness. Real personality is sensitive to the underlying cosmic drift or choice and its own choice is thus through participation in larger choice.

The sustaining value in personality is this participation in a superior harmony. Here is no limitation and no lack of assertive individuality but rather an inherent concordance. The illuminated soul is no less moved by personal desires and petty likes than the little soul, but the latter is always inept in its demands whereas the former is patient and sees with the eye of immortality. Wishing to participate, the illuminated soul wishes more to have the highest cosmic accompaniment and hence it finds the proper season or the time and place. In accepting guidance by the higher to this end it knows the constant fellowship of ultimate reality or real experience of a freedom from time-and-space crowding to act.

The social genius of the soul is found in its utilization of the group for its own unfoldment. Normally the individual is constricted by group necessity, especially in primitive life or under economic discipline as in the regimented state. But this, Plotinus explains, is an overruling only to put the individual under order by holding him within himself in his sense of choice and thus encouraging him towards the harmony of his initial choosing. Naturally the endowment of life by the All will fetter the creative power of the individual, and so he must be stimulated by the All to his own eventual wholeness. It is not sufficient to mold life by experience, that is, by the process of conditioning or rule by wiser elder brothers or guidance by divine spirits or group souls, but the individual if he is to remain an immortal member of his ultimate order must be released in the harmonious genius of himself. Afterthought is never creative, but only pure outstreaming of selfhood. The practical aspect of personality is its confidence in its own outstreaming, and so on lower and more superficial levels any contact with personality may be unpleasant and far removed from an intimation of immortality. But the roughness of the diamond is signature of its value when cut. Personality begins its manifestation of harmony in the depths of itself, and then shares in choice and expression of its unifying impulse. To illustrate, man must first achieve pleasure in self and then learn the joy of sharing self-esteem. Only with growth does he come to know the invisible fellowship of a larger harmony. Wrong is not an absence of right but an inadequate perspective. A hopelessly unendowed little girl who in a fussiness of self-respect wins the love of the young man piqued by her harmony of reserve is following nature's course in her development. Life can be evaluated only through act or

doing and suffering is a gain for the good, as Plotinus asserts, because personality is reaching out perhaps all unsuspectingly to gain a necessary new outlook.

The individuality of personality lies in the harmony of its voice of itself. The ideal is embraced in the being before it is spoken of, but personality is never silent nor detached from soul and the reality of the ideal. Soul gives of its best and yields most in the ideal realms where its freedom exists although sharing in the lowest as permitted by its embodiment. Personality thus is an articulation of the best that can be given. The ultimate distinction of personality is the best that is its voice and being. Even in the grossness of a debased soul the personality strains for distinction, so that many a despicable man is graced with fine manners and artistic achievement. For the average seeker the operation of personality is the effort of hope and the enactment of expectation. When an individual struts in life his is the personality of a groping soul. When life offers the chance for a particularly graceful act the personality may speak for a soul awakened to an ultimate harmony. Soul is responsible upwards, in Plotinian terms, and personality is likened to the steersman of the ship in danger as he is mindful of the ship rather than of himself. Personality ever acts in the light of some overshadowing harmony.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- (1) What are three definitions of harmony given here? What common element do you note in all three? What have choice and harmony in common?
- (2) What have the soul and harmony to do with each other and with choice? What is cosmic choice? How does real personality share in this?
- (3) What is the inherent concordance which characterizes the participation of personality in harmony? Can personality be unconscious? Can soul? Justify your answer.
- (4) How may the illuminated and the little soul be compared? Through what mediums does the soul unfold? To what degree is this limitation? How may soul avoid limitation?
- (5) What is the outstreaming of personality? What may result? How should it be evaluated? If personality is never silent of what does it speak? How is this related to harmony? How does personality operate? In what relation with soul? With harmony?